

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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CONFIDENTIAL MONTEVIDEO 0357

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UY

SUBJ: BOLENTINI RESIGNS, NEW MINISTER OF INTERIOR NAMED

REF: IR 6 900 0024 74

1. SUMMARY: COL NESTOR BOLENTINI, MINISTER OF INTERIOR, RESIGNED FEBRUARY 11. ARMY COL HUGO LINARES WAS SWORN IN REPLACING HIM EARLY ON FEBRUARY 12. ALTHOUGH BOLENTINI'S DEPARTURE WAS SOUGHT BY THE FACTION HEADED BY GENERAL ESTEBAN CRISTI, THE NEW MINISTER IS CLOSE TO MODERATE ARMY CINC CHIAPPE. THUS, THE CHANGE PROBABLY DOES NOT REPRESENT A SHIFT IN THE BALANCE BETWEEN MILITARY GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTER OF INTERIOR BOLENTINI RESIGNED LATE IN THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 11, "FOR STRICTLY PERSONAL REASONS." COL BOLENTINI, AT THE SAME TIME, ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS RETIRING FROM THE ARMY AND THAT HE WOULD RETURN TO PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE. PRESIDENT BORDABERRY DESIGNATED COL HUGO LINARES, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, AS NEWMINISTER OF INTERIOR WITHIN A FEW HOURS.

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3. COMMENT: BOLENTINI WILL BE MISSED. HE WAS SIMPATICO TO THE PEOPLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE MEDIA, SOMETIMES ADDING THE NOTE OF LEVITY NEEDED IN SOMBER SITUATIONS. WE, TOO MAY MISS BOLENTINI AS HE WAS MOST COOPERATIVE WITH US IN DELICATE CASES INVOLVING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. HOWEVER, HIS VOLUBILITY AND POLITICAL AMBITIOUSNESS FREQUENTLY WERE AN ANATHEMA TO OTHERS OF THE MILITARY, INCLUDING FIRST DIVISION COMMANDER CRISTI WHO HAD LONG SOUGHT BOLENTINI'S SCALP.

4. LINARES IS NOT WELL KNOWN TO US. AS REPORTED IN THE REFERENCE, HE IS SPHINX-LIKE AND ONLY TIME WILL

TELL WHAT KIND OF MINISTER HE WILL BE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND FOR US INTERESTS.

5. THE CHANGE OF MINISTERS CAME AS A RESULT OF THE GENERALS PROMOTION LIST WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE BOLENTIN, WHO HAD ENTERED THE COMPETITION FOR PROMOTION. HAVING FAILED, BOLENTINI DECIDED TO RESIGN AS MINISTER AND RETIRE FROM THE ARMY. IN A SENSE, THEREFORE, DEVELOPMENTS HAVE FAVORED THE CRISTI GROUP WHICH HAS LONG SOUGHT THE REMOVAL OF MINISTERS PAZOS (RECENTLY FIRED), BOLENTINI AND MEDERO, AND PLANNING AND BUDGET DIRECTOR COHEN. HOWEVER, LINARES IS MOST CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH ARMY CINC GENERAL CHIAPPE,; INCREASINGLY INFLUENTIAL AMONG ARMY MODERATES OPPOSING THE CRISTI BLOC. THUS, THE CHANGE IN MINISTERS OF INTERIOR PROBABLY HAS NOT RESULTED IN ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE BALANCE BETWEEN MILITARY GROUPS.

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